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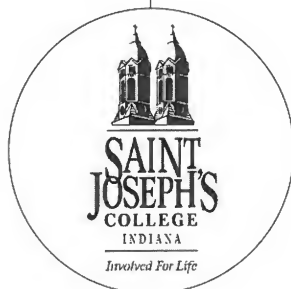
MEASURE

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The Eternal Job Notice

Jean Monfort

I needed a job. It started when I saw this ad in the paper:

Established talent agency seeking alluring female singers, any age, all sizes welcome. Must be willing to travel.

There was a number attached. I was intrigued, and more than a little skeptical. Still, I reasoned, at this point it might be good to try the random job. Hadn't I always wanted a job in entertainment? And what did I have to lose? So I called the posted number, and talked to a woman named Roxanne who told me where to bring my information.

My car trip led to an unremarkable office building with a dirty white front. I put on the rest of my makeup in the parking lot, and adjusted my bra as best I could. Alluring, I had to picture myself as alluring. I stared at myself in the small rearview mirror. I did not look particularly alluring, except maybe for my jaw. I pictured the would-be models who must be on the inside of that door, full of vocal and physical majesty. And I, looking like a yodeling dwarf doing a two-step. No, that wouldn't do. I kicked myself out of my own car, and grabbed my sheet music and black and white head shot from the backseat. Smoothing my top, I did my best to stride through the door.

The inside was dimly lit with fluorescent lights. The carpet was gray, the desk was gray, topped with white laminate. No one was there. Great, I thought, shrugging my bag further up my shoulder. I drove two hours for a joke. Looking around, I found a small stack of business cards on the desk in front of me. It read "Piper Productions: Engaging Artists for Centuries." I chuckled, and then I heard a door shut in the recesses of the dimly lit hallway. I quickly grabbed a seat and pulled out the folder with my photo and music in it.

After less than a minute, a woman walked into the lobby. She was tall and angular, almost gaunt. Her elbows jutted out from her side as she moved, and her hips seemed to follow suit. The most striking thing about her head was that it was wrapped in an emerald green turban that stuck out from all around her head, rather than just back from it. Without visible hair, the woman's face looked as pale as the desktop. She had brown eyes, and her lipstick was as vibrant a shade of red as her turban was green. Seeing me, she smiled.

"Ah, are you here about the ad?" She had an accent, but I don't know much about accents. I guess she sounded like she was Slavic.

"Yes," I said, smiling. It's important to smile when you meet new people, but not too much or they think you're loopy. I handed her my picture and small résumé, which she took and looked at briefly. I got the impression that she didn't really see what I had put down. Perfect. Another uninterested secretary. She looked up and smiled at me, showing surprisingly white teeth.

"Mr. Piper will be most pleased to see you now. Follow me if you will." She motioned for me

to follow her down the hallway. I did so, though I was a little weirded out by the unconventional way things were going. Still, it was promising, the idea that I was going straight to a personal interview with someone. Maybe the ad really did mean what it said. The secretary sashayed in front of me till we reached one of the last doors of the right. She ushered me into a surprisingly large room, with more fluorescent lighting and a wall with mirrors flecked with rust. I walked in, and she shut the door behind me. I looked around, ready to smile.

“Well, you’re not quite alluring. Except perhaps for the jaw line.” Said a male voice. I looked around, but didn’t see anyone. Maybe there was a hidden room somewhere? I didn’t know how to respond to his comment about my face, except to silently agree. He continued.

“Do you have your song prepared?”

“Yes sir, Mr. Piper?” I looked around for a piano.

“Sing unaccompanied. The best singers do.”

Fighting the sense that I had blundered into something well over my head, I started to sing. I have a decent voice, and I picked a song that didn’t stretch my range too far. About midway through my song, though, he cut me off.

“Fine, fine, fine. Can we give you a different song?” A melody trickled out of a pair of old speakers. It sounded funny, like it was not quite on key with itself. “The lyric is there on the table.” I looked around and saw an old wooden table in the corner of the room, a sheet of paper on top of it. I picked it up and walked back to the center of the room, trying not to stare at myself in the mirror.

“Just pick it up when you can. It repeats itself,” said the voice, sounding friendly. I nodded and listened. This was obviously a test, to see if I could pick up on things fast, how quick I was with music. It wasn’t a hard melody, or a tricky lyric.

“Come along with me my love. Sweetly lie with me my love. Stay and be my darling love. Be with me alone my love.” I mean, it was a little repetitive, but there was a nice quality to the song. It sounded almost like a lullaby, except of course for that slightly off-key feeling. It was a little discordant. The second time through I opened up a little bit, trying to put a little more expression into it. The third time I wondered when he would tell me to stop, or if I was supposed to wait till the music ended. The fourth time through my mind was blank. I didn’t think of anything at all except the music. And I kept going. I couldn’t stop because the music kept playing, and the song needed to finish, but it continued. I don’t know how long I stood there, singing.

“Hmm...excellent.” The voice came from a second doorway I had not noticed before. I turned and saw him standing there in the doorway. Taking up most of the doorway, in fact. He was tall, and broad. He wore an old fashioned hat, set atop a mass of hair that fell to his shoulders. He swept into the room, holding a clipboard. His eyes, when I saw them, flashed green. My constitution has never been tested, so I don’t know if I have a strong one or not, but I was almost immediately attracted to something about him. He was what the ad wanted. He was alluring.

“And you’re available for immediate travel?” He asked, shuffling papers on the clipboard.

"Yes," I croaked. He looked up at me and from somewhere he produced a flask.

"Drink," he said. I did. It was alcohol for certain, and it burned. But I felt better afterwards, and handed the flask back.

"Are you very attached to your family?"

"Not really. We get together on holidays and stuff."

"Mmmhmm." He stopped moving papers, and stood back, looking me over. I tried not to fidget.

"What sort of singing job are you looking for?" I finally asked when I couldn't stand being stared at any more. He handed me the clipboard and a pen.

"We need an alluring sort of female to sing out in our Mediterranean office. Then we'd move you as needed. I think you'd be a good fit, but we need to make sure. Can't hire and fire in our line of work. We need committed workers, yes?" I was listening to his words, but was distracted by him. I found him mesmerizing. He was still talking, about travel and working, and then the secretary was bringing in a chair, and a confused looking man. I was holding the clipboard in my hand somehow. And the music was playing again.

"Now," said Mr. Piper, gently placing his hands on my shoulder, bringing his voice right next to my ear. It made me shiver. "Sing this man out of the chair. I know you have the gift. That's why you saw the ad and answered it. Sing this man out of the chair, darling girl." I would have jumped off a cliff. I would have stood in front of a steamroller. I would have done anything, just to have him call me darling again, and all he wanted me to do was sing. There was a moment where I wasn't sure what he meant by singing the man out of the chair, but I didn't care. I stared at the man. Had he always been tied up? I could feel the music in my bloodstream now.

"Come along with me my love. Sweetly lie with me my love. Stay and be my darling love. Be with me alone my love." I imagined the words like clouds of perfume in the old cartoons, wafting through the air with romantic fingers and flower blossoms. I pictured myself as sexy, as an object of desire. The man in the chair looked uncomfortable. I kept singing, concentrating. I barely felt Mr. Piper pull me back till I was almost on the opposite wall from the stranger. The secretary was scattering something shiny on the floor. I kept singing. "Come along with me my love. Sweetly lie with me my love. Stay and be my darling love. Be with me alone my love." I kept my eye contact with the stranger, sending every emotion I could think of that would make him move. He was staring at me now, a strange hazy look in his eyes. It frightened me a little, but I kept singing. On the fourth time through, he was pulling at his ties. On the fifth he howled, which almost made me stop, were it not for the warmth of Mr. Piper's hands on my shoulders.

Have you ever popped a joint? Or had a joint popped back into place? That's sort of how I felt at the time. I felt like my voice was popping out of my body, stretching beyond its natural boundaries. The seventh time, or thereabouts, the man fell forward, still attached to the chair. Like a horrid inchworm he crawled towards me, eyes closed. I kept singing, even though I was frightened. He rolled around on the ground, coming closer. He reached the shiny things on the floor, screamed, but twisted

forward. When he reached my feet, Mr. Piper stopped him with a sort of stick. The stranger was bloody, his face cut and stuck with bits of broken glass. The music stopped, and so did I.

"Beautiful," Mr. Piper said, approval making his voice even richer. His blue eyes met mine and shined as though I were a long lost relative. "You are perfect for this job. Sign here, please." He pointed to a line on the clipboard. I hesitated. I mean, there was a stranger who crawled through glass because I willed him to. A small part of me was telling me to run.

"What else will you do, Atalanta?" He asked, taking my face in his hand. "What job will offer you what this one does? I offer you something unique. Work for me, Atalanta. We will be great together, you and I. And it's not all broken glass you know. Think of what you could do..." My hand was signing my name as he spoke, though I don't recall ever looking down. It didn't seem to matter that I never told him my name. Everything he said made such sense! That done, the clipboard disappeared and the man was ushered out of the room by the secretary.

"Mr. P? You have an appointment with the..." she stopped. "Oh, has the Siren position been filled?" She flashed her smile at me. "You'll do so well out in the Med. We haven't had that spot filled for...well, a really long time now." She disappeared. Mr. Piper was gone too. I was by myself in the room. I was by myself in the building, apparently, because most of the lights were off and the door was unhinged. I went back to my apartment, but nothing felt right. Everything looked old or unused or just plain out of place. I felt anxious to be elsewhere. That night I went to a bar, just to look around. I hummed the song to myself, and got hit on by no fewer than ten guys, some with girlfriends still attached to their arms. I had to leave when one looked like she was going to kill me.

The next day I found a plane ticket in my mail box. It was to some Greek island. With it was a note, telling me not to pack anything. I already felt so disconnected from my life I did so without question. I don't remember much of the plane trip, nor how I actually got to the island. I remember Mr. Piper was there, with his secretary, and a small boat. After navigating some very crazy rocks we arrived at a small sheltered cove on an equally small island. I hopped off, but Mr. Piper did not leave the boat. I looked at him, curious.

"This is your new office, my dear," he said, kissing my hand.

"But—" I looked around, suddenly very aware, very frightened. "What do I do?"

"Sing," he said, his brown eyes matching the warm smile he gave me. "Sing, Atalanta. Do me proud." And then they were rowing off, and I was alone. I walked over the island. It wasn't very big, and there was a small sort of hutch for me, with clothes and a cot. It was hot. I didn't get hungry, or thirsty. I just stood there, for three days, looking around and trying to figure out what to do. Sing, Piper had told me. Sing. So I started singing, quietly. Nothing came of it, but it was distracting.

A month went by. I got really lonely. I kept singing, though, and the song sort of became a mantra, then a plea. I really missed people. Then, I saw a ship on the horizon line, growing closer. People! I called out, but my voice couldn't carry. So, I sang louder. I sang as best as I could to draw them to me. I tried to be alluring. I tried to reach out.

When the first boat crashed on the rocks, I chalked it up to bad luck. When the fifth boat crashed

on the rocks, I got angry. How hard is it to navigate? By the tenth, it became a sad joke. I wanted nothing more than to have them reach me, and all they wanted to do was reach me, but the rocks inevitably killed them. Soon after that, I went a little crazy and did it out of vengeance. Then I cried for a week. I only wanted company, and the only way to get company was to sing for people to come to me. And they did, in boats big and small, and they all crashed on the rocks.

Time swirled. I have no idea how much of it went by. But there was a day when Mr. Piper came to visit me. I leapt over the crags when I recognized him at the oars of the small boat. I had become very good at jumping, but bad at talking. The only thing I knew was the song. Mr. Piper brought me something like jell-o, which filled me up. He touched my face. I had forgotten what it felt like. He told me he was proud of me, that I was the best since the time of Odysseus. He kissed me, which seemed to fix things. My mouth formed different words.

“Will you stay?”

“I cannot.”

“Can I make you stay? I can sing you to stay,” I said, clutching his shirt.

“It doesn’t work on the divine,” he said, not unkindly. He patted me on the head. “How many ships have you called? How many men?”

“More than twenty. I hear men screaming for me, but they die on the rocks.” I started to cry.

“Why do they all die? I just want company!”

“That is your eternal question,” he said. “And the siren’s eternal conundrum. If you ever figure it out, let me know.” And he left.

I guess there are worse forms of employment. I live in a beautiful locale. I never get sick, being blessed by the gods and all. And I get to sing all the time. My voice calls men from above the sea to live below it. It’s a gift and curse. Sometimes I recall a vague memory of fluorescent lights and rusty mirrors, of a life of sweater jackets, white bread and letters saying “no” on them. I dream of a beautiful man in an old hat, telling me there was more. But those memories dissipate in the sunlight, and fade with every repetition of the song.

“Never has any sailor passed our shores in his black craft
until he has heard the honeyed voices pouring from our lips...

So they sent their ravishing voices out across the air
And the heart inside me throbbed to listen longer.”

The Odyssey Book 12 - Homer

Sleeping Beauty

Elizabeth Gray

My prince won't come someday,
For he died falling from a cliff by the bay.
My step-mother was glad to see him depart,
And, I must admit, I also take heart.
For, cloudy mornings are lovely without sunrise love calls,
And nights sure end early without an ascent up my walls.
Yes, as days go on and his voice still lingers,
I 'accidentally' find a needle and prick my finger.
So during the day, I'll dream of a world without men.
And at night, I'll have dreams that I get to push him again.

Celebration of the Arts

Christina Heath

The comical relief of satirical efforts
Published secretly, bluntly.
Amusing the four humors and Hecate alike.

Mediums and minds are hung paintings around the world,
Hung in hearts like mine.

Sirens' creation of melody,
Everlasting,
Even after muses and fates decide
Destinies and string's length.

Optical illusions of previous thoughts
Keep generations questioning themselves,
As words rewrite themselves, piling up like dead bodies.

Stacking frame upon frame, as colors bleed onto each other,
Like rain.

The pounding of drums, heartbeats,
Equal the flow of ballerinas,
Mixing stanzas of emotional attempt.

Goddess Vessel III

Bonnie Zimmer

(milk weed pods, cotton thread)



Baby Blue

Jennifer Ruff

Clive retrieved the keys from the inside of his faded jean pocket and put them into the ignition of his eighteen wheeler. As he turned the key, he heard the sound that brought a smile to his face every time. That purr was the symbol of his independence, work ethic and overall life. His beauty knew him so well and he had the knowledge of her. He had created her. After he received his license he had taken almost his entire savings account and bought her. Yet buying her was only the first step. He worked almost nonstop on her until he eventually made enough to provide his baby with all he thought she needed.

Now she was perfect. Her bright blue exterior shone brightly in the sun and perfectly matched the ocean blue seats and sleeper Clive so carefully picked out. Anything for his Baby Blue. At the end of all his hard work, Baby looked like she had once been a candidate on Trick my Truck.

Although this wasn't the case for this Mack Truck. She was simply a product of one man's vehicular affection. He didn't have a family to spoil, never really wanted one. He knew that this was how he wanted to live his life. Who needed a wife, kids, or pets when you had a beautiful steel beauty who you could talk to?

"You ready baby?" he said with a smile. It was going to be a good day; he could feel it. "Your Clivey is going to take you all the way to Kansas City today!" The sound of complete silence echoed in the cab of his soul mate. "I know, I know dear."

"Don't you worry, I make sure you get your rest."

"I know honey. You are a growing young women who has needs."

"Don't worry sweetheart. Don't worry!"

Clive moved his baby onto the crowded interstate. He looked around the sleeper and softly asked "How about some music?" After a few moments of waiting, he turned the radio dial up slightly and listened intently as the sound of rock and roll flooded the cab of the truck. Clive's smile turned sour after a few minutes of listening.

"Oh, Honey, I am sorry! I forgot you only listen to classical" This statement sent him frantically trying to manage the wheel and turn the station to the sounds of Bach and Mozart.

Two hours passed and Clive still sat in complete silence after the horrible incident with the radio. Baby was not talking to him anymore and refused to listen to his point of view. "It was a simple mistake, honey! Anyone could do it! I promise I will never do it again! Please, baby, just talk to me!"

Minutes went by, and still no sound. Clive began to slowly tap his fingers on the steering wheel. The silence was eating away at him like acid on a piece of metal. He hated to amuse himself. What else was there to pass the time? He had no real thoughts. He only cared about one thing in this world and right now she didn't want to have anything to do with him. He tried to pass the time by watching the

world that was flying by him and his baby. Ahead to the right, he spotted a tiny roadside diner that was a trucker's paradise. His stomach began talking more than his Baby had in quite awhile. After hearing the cry of his intestines once more, he decided to pull into this small yellow and red café.

He walked through the rusty metal door, leaving his Baby Blue in the gravel parking lot. Sitting at one of the diner bar seats was a very attractive young woman with long curly brown hair. Clive felt a magnetic pull that led him to the seat next to this beauty. He had never been attracted to an actual human being before. In fact, Baby was the only one he had ever shown affection to. He sat down on the red cushioned seat carefully, as if there was an explosive in his back pants pocket. The curly-haired beauty shot him a smile, showing him that she noticed his presence. Clive felt something melt inside of him. He couldn't really explain it because he had never felt anything like it. He smiled back as he felt his cheeks blush.

"Hello" he said softly. She looked him up and down as if inspecting what she was getting herself into. Then words left her mouth, signaling her approval. "Hey! I'm Gwen." The sound of her name sent a slight chill up the poor man's spine. "I'm Clive. You know like Bonnie and Clive"

"I thought it was Bonnie and Clyde?" she asked after a laugh and another breath-taking smile. Clive sat there in silence for a few moments then he became red in the face once again.

"Oh...yeah....that's right! I always mess that up!"

Gwen reached over and patted the tomato-faced man on the back. "It's no big deal. I actually think that Bonnie and Clive sounds better anyway! So where are you from?"

The question scared Clive, for he knew that many would not approve of his on-the-road lifestyle. "I don't really live anywhere."

"Oh... You mean... You live on the streets?" she asked with a pitiful and disgusted look on her face.

"No, No, No! That's not it at all. I live in my truck. It's the blue one out there. You could say I live "at work" He chuckled and hoped that she wouldn't leave after that statement.

"Oh, that's a lot better than my first thought!" The young girl's eyes widened as she took her finger and stroked the sleeve of Clive's light blue shirt.

"I've always wanted to see the inside of a semi. Do you mind?"

The thought of Gwen in his place made Clive burst with excitement and he answered loudly and quickly. "Sure, I'd be glad to show you around." He walked her out to the parking lot thinking of what might happen when they get inside. When they finally reached Blue, she finally talked to him, but it wasn't pleasant.

"What is that and why is it coming inside me? Are you going to cheat on me right under my nose? Is that how you want to be? How can you do this me?"

He decided to give her the same treatment he had received from her minutes before. He led Gwen into his sleeper and gave her the official five minute tour. Once finished, Gwen returned to Clive's small bed located in the back of the cab. After receiving a tiny gesture from the woman's right pointer finger, Clive inched his way to her until he was seated next to her. Gwen stared at him blankly for a

moment and then reached over and kissed him gently on the lips. He responded and began kissing the young girl back in the comfort of his truck.

“What are you doing?! You idiot! How could you do this? Think of all I have done for you! I can’t let you do this! I can’t let you destroy what we have!”

Suddenly the hands that were gently caressing Gwen’s face began to tighten and slid down to her neck. Shock hit the girl’s face as well as Clive’s. Screams echoed in the small cab as she kicked and flailed, trying to save her life.

“No you can’t do this!” the poor man cried. “She didn’t do anything! Please just let her go. It’s my fault! Please...No!” After a few moments, efforts were deemed a failure as the poor woman took her last breath.

“What did you do?!” The man screamed as he removed his hands from Gwen’s bruised and lifeless neck.

“I had to stop you. I just had to. One day you will understand. But for now, you must hide the body.”

Toast

Dan Zimmer

How I wish I could take a bath again.
But I can't,
I'm afraid,
I'm scared,
I think I'm insane!
All because of that damn accident.
Breakfast in the bathtub was one of our serious matters!
I used to bring him eggs,
waffles,
or bacon.
But that day he wanted toast,
now that was his last meal.
He said "I'll do it myself.
Surely, you do too much!"
and then he did.
He went up in smoke
All in just a splash!
Now I'm left here,
Afraid to take a bath.

I Saw The Pope

Mike Koscielny

Ben-né

Aw, snap. Get your hymnals ready, turn to page two-six-three. Everybody in the church hit the wooden pews, but stand for the opening procession. We singin' this. Let's pray.

I saw the Pope; I saw the Pope. Everybody look at me 'cause I really saw the Pope. I saw the Pope; I saw the Pope. Take a good, hard look at the super holy Pope.

I saw the pope, Mother Teresa, take a look at me. Straight prayin' wit da pope, head'a da Holy Sea. Bustin' five pr'yer, words whisp'rin' full of hope. You can't stop me, Illuminati, 'cause I saw the Pope.

Take a picture, Val. I saw the Pope, girl. We drinkin' Communion Wine 'cause it's so fine. I got my head bowed, and my handies folded. I'm sayin' prayers; you in confession, straight sayin' sorry.

I'm standin' in a queue, crackin' jokes and puns. The jokes aren't good, no one's havin' any fun. But this ain't com'dy club, the joke's as fu'ny as I use. I saw the Pope, Easter Sunday, don't you ever be-muse.

I saw the Pope and he gave a bless-an wearin' a silver and gold Papal Fanon. He's leadin' the free world, on a balcony like Juliet. If he lost a bet, you bet he'd still be Benedict. (Get your eyes up, the Eucharist is real).

F'rget priests, I saw the Pope Easter Sunday. F'rget church, I wenta th'Vatican Easter Sunday. I'm in the chairs with my boys, Easter Sunday. The church bells make noise, Easter Sunday.

Hey Sally, if you could see us shine, up really er'ly to get in the line. Gonna get thru the line to good seats some time. Mark Simmons said, "there's no bad experiences."

Yeah. Never thought I'd see the Pope. It's a big marbl' St. Peter's Square. Yeah. Hey Jesus, look at me, oooh. Never thought I'd see the place where Angels and Demons took place. Believe me when I say, I met a sister.

I saw the Pope; I saw the pope. Everybody look at me 'cause I really saw the Pope. I saw the Pope; I saw the Pope. Take a good, hard look at the super holy Pope.

Ben-né. Ben-né. AAAAA-a-men.

Eagle Trail

Brandon Bennett

Many start up the trail with you,
Young and cheery boys.
Some drop out along the way
As you continue onward.
You begin to learn more
About the woods, yourself,
And how to be a good person.
As you grow older
You continue up the trail.
It has grown steeper, and
You find that there are not
Many others with you now.
At last you reach the top.
Hands reach out to help you up.
You stand among your fellow Eagles,
But the trail doesn't end here.
The lessons that age teaches
Must now be passed on.
You turn around, look back on the trail,
And prepare to help the next Eagle up.

Lake Gertrude

Maggie Schmitt

23



Does He Know?

Anna Rohaly

Does he know how much he hurt her,
the night he destroyed her life?
Does he ever think of what he's done,
how she can't sleep at night because of him?
He has stripped her of all sense of safety
by ripping the clothes off her back.
He destroyed all peace she held inside
when he desecrated her body with his lust.
His cruel, cold hands bruised her,
his oppressive body pressed her down,
imprinted a memory on her mind, her body,
a disgusting memory she cannot forget.
He thinks he has stolen her dignity,
but he has only stolen her faith in humanity.
Each night her dreams terrorize and haunt her,
her own shadow makes her jump,
each day is a crushing burden of fear.
He thinks his actions show his manhood,
but doesn't he know that they only prove him a boy,
with no courage or strength or love?
Does he know he can never take back that night,
the night he left her, raped, bleeding, and beaten?
I hope that it haunts him each and every night,
that the memory breaks through his sleep,
that each night he wakes up, panicked,
drowning in a sea of guilt and anger,
forever unable to forget.

The Perfect Crime

Elysse Hillyer

The solution was hydrochloric acid; the problem was, therefore, a dead body.

First on the checklist is to clean the blood off the floor

...and the bathtub, sink, and mirror.

Replace everything that was knocked over,

no signs of a struggle.

Sneak out to the woods.

Soak the body in acid.

Drive to my uncle's farm in the dead of night,

feed the remains to the pigs, they'll eat anything.

Flee to Cuba.

Obsession

Morgan Myers

Burning, sweating, agonizing pain...Yearning for something so close. He was so hungry. Starving, skeletal fingers clawed at the iron-covered walls, the poisonous metal burning his flesh, but he loved the pain. There was something, someone it made him remember.

A child. A girl. Now a woman. He could see her, her cherub face while she played outside in the flowers, no more than six or seven years old. Out in the sunshine in the flowers, in front of a massive mansion home in the country side. She was human. He could see deep purple and blue mountains in the background. He had never seen the house before. But the girl...

There was movement to his side, and he turned to see his kind, three adult vampires, watching the girl with small, indulgent smiles from the deep shadows of the forest. A growl was spilling from his lips before he realized it, but none of the males even turned a head in his direction. He, the King, stood before them and none even acknowledged his claim.

"What is this?" he whispered, eyes riveted on the girl. She was running through the flowers. They all saw the dip and rock far before her human eyes could. But her guards were slowed by the sun, weakened by the rays. He was a couple hundred feet away at the very edge of the wood.

He saw her foot catch in the dip, her hands instinctively going out to catch herself. His mind brought it all in, calculated the speed and angle of the fall. Humans were weak easy prey, and their bodies fragile. It was easy to know she would break a wrist in the fall, catching it on the rough rock, along with a mild concussion as her head followed.

In a burst of speed he caught her small body just as the tips of her fingers brushed the stone. He cradled her close to his chest, her warmth seeping into his body. She began to wriggle against him, and he pulled her back and away. She gave him a brilliant smile as she stood in front of him, his hands on her shoulders. He was caught by her eyes, a deep green. Her hair was bright brown, but he could see the hint of a fiery red in the light curls. He smiled back. She slowly faded from his arms...

He bashed his head against the concrete floor, watching as the blood dripped from his forehead. No more than three—four drops. All he had. It was painful healing the cut. He was so hungry, so numb. He needed the pain, needed to remember her face, her body, every angle and plane of her smooth skin. He had watched her grow up through the dreams.

Silky flesh moved against his body, sweat mingling with sweat, their bodies molding together, becoming one. Fiery hair trailed across his chest, tangling in his fingers as he held her. She took him in as he took her, feeding at her neck, moving in her body...

He knew there was something wrong with him. His mind wasn't right, his body was weak, feeble, his muscles deteriorated without use. He was taking too much blood, clawed hands digging into her fragile skin. But his stomach was like a grinding hole in his abdomen. Nothing could fill it, and she was so sweet, so rich, like nothing he had ever tasted before in his thousand years. Her body was complacent under his, submitting to his greedy hunger. She knew what he needed. She could feel

him, the tie to him, just as his soul called out for her. He kept up his greedy pulls on her delicate veins.

He was killing her. He knew he was, but he couldn't stop.

Abruptly he ripped his head from her sweet throat. She was still, cold, her throat torn open like an animal had gone at her. There were five small gouges on each side, slowly trailing blood down her creamy skin. He couldn't look at his hands.

His roar echoed in the small steel room. He stumbled off the smashed bed, fell into the shattered mirror, slicing his hands and forearms, but the pain mattered little. It brought his mind a little focus.

He was going insane. It had only been a dream, a dream and a nightmare. He had saved his Chosen as a child, and then killed her with his impossible hunger. She was all he could think of, all he lived for.

She was so close now. He imagined he could catch her sweet scent, that wildflower scent that haunted his every moment. And he didn't even know her name. She was his very life, his hope, his reason, his strength, and he knew nothing about her but her fiery hair and her green eyes, like the deep green of tree leaves in the height of summer. Everything about her spoke of life and spirit. All he could bring her was a shattered mind and an insatiable hunger. She would be lucky if he did not kill her as soon as he was released. It was simply a matter of time, of biding his time and reserving what energy he had left to protect her when she called on him.

He laughed into the darkness, a rasping chuckle that grated on his sensitive ears. The irony of it all was that he had never even met her in the flesh. Everything he knew of her was simply from their joined dreams. And he knew from them that she thought he was no more than a compelling figment of her imagination.

He dropped onto the shredded mattress—he had torn it apart about one hundred years into his imprisonment, right after he felt the first of his cabinet slip into the killing rage that was a plague to his people—and stared at the steel ceiling. Almost six hundred years of waiting for the human bloodline to produce his mate, his Chosen, and hundreds of his people fallen into insanity, and now she was of age. When the time was right, she would release him to rule his race as he was meant to, a King not only in name, but also in action. She would be Queen at his side. He laid back on the mattress, propping his head on what was left of his flattened pillow.

He would wait.

Pages

Christina Heath

Make no demands of unfulfilled dreams,
Or hidden symbolic meaning
Endlessly marking the previously untainted pages,
With their dyes of Black and Blue;
The colors of death and bruises.

Humans appear to simply observe obvious concepts,
Not the consciously unseen
Perspectives and convictions;
Explanations, contemplations, reflections, and aspirations
Devised with intention, shaped in hopes of connection and
Acceptance into the subconscious,
Were fashioned by artists famous and anonymous alike,
Are intimately protected within hearts and minds,
Find everlasting existence
On pages.

Under these missives
Is an incomplete creation,
Animate and vulnerable like a child.
Craving valid identification and acceptance.
But unlike a child,
It remains trapped, forever, on these pages;
Waiting for some kind of conclusion, the coming of age, or
A final draft
That is possibly never possible.

These hidden allusions
Are like stories molded by a creator's dying inspiration.
Promptly abandoned,
Left inflicting vengeance
By maddening thoughts and cruelly provoking melancholy,
As they yearn for survival

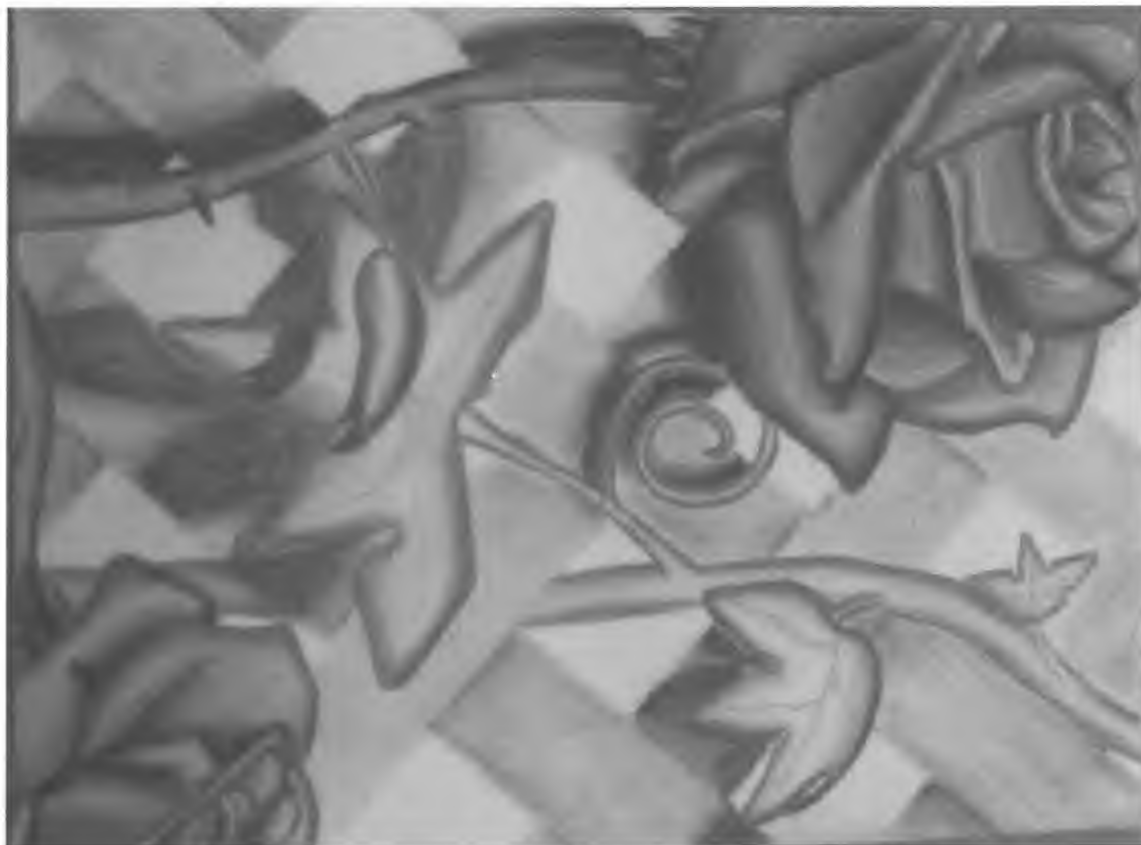
Hoping to conquer a premature mortality
Creating a life of their own.

Scholars and critics will never be able to grasp,
The tragic death of
Once desired visions and dreams,
Now painstakingly incomplete,
Residing eternally buried and wasted,
Never comprehending,
Never appreciating,

What words truly mean,
On pages.

Love/Hate

Shane Pack



Gotham

Francisco Gonzalez



From the docks across the Hudson,
I see the island so many revere,
With buildings built high into the clouds,
And networks of elevated trains overlapping each other.

On the map it's known as Manhattan
While others call it the "Big Apple," or "the island,"
But my heart tells me what kind of souls dwell over there.
Gotham is more suiting to describe its people.

I've heard many speak of all of its wealth and riches,
While I have seen nothing but poverty and beggars;
"Golden gem of the Empire State," my father once said,
To me it's nothing but a dismal metropolis on the map.

People crowd the many streets to jobs they despise,
While thick blankets of smog float over their heads;
Commercial buildings serve as ant hills,
The giant skyscrapers house the wealthy, sipping their Gibsons.

From the row houses of Astoria,
It appears to be heaven's gate
But I will waste no time when I go over there
To catch the next train out of that horrible place.

A Memory

Patricia Roeder

As I am now indulged in studies
Reading wistful poetry,
I pause and recollect some things
That fill my happy memory.
I see the ocean, vast and gray,
The wind wisps quick and strong.
My hair flies wild in the breeze
As I casually stroll along
The frigid coastline. However I
Am comfortable, nice and warm.
Some worn-out sweatshirt envelops me.
Very casually I'm adorned.
This combined state of hot and cold
I feel while at the ocean
Reflects my state, I find, inside:
A mix of fear and yet devotion.
The Atlantic's huge and quite foreboding,
It's stern and sometimes threatening.
But yet there's beauty to be found
As it flows into a sun that's setting.
I run slow in the cold, stiff sand
As the energy warms my body.
I see the seagulls overhead,
Their coats are smooth and spotty.

* * *

I don't know why this memory
Gives me fond recollection.
Perhaps it's because a contrast combined
together, perfectly, without tension.
I only felt my mind at ease.
I felt adventurous and calm.
So now that I have told you all,
I'll read some more, with chin in palm.

The Only Thing

Jennifer Lindahl



I see that face
the only one that seems to constantly haunt me in my head.
I keep telling myself that all I need is my space
so how come I'm sitting here right now wishing you were lying next to me
in my bed.
I ache for your touch,
I miss your smile,
how does it seem so possible to care for just one person this much...
If you truly mean this much to me then why is it so hard for me to take
your number, my phone and just dial.

Seeking

Morgan Myers

The light is blinding.
In this darkness, falling;
The light is calling.
A voice so distant,
Hope so far inside.

When you're lost,
The paths so crossed,
You cannot hope to
Escape this fate.

But there's hope, somewhere,
Always hope out there;
A light to your night,
A beacon in the dark
To lead you from the tangled wood.

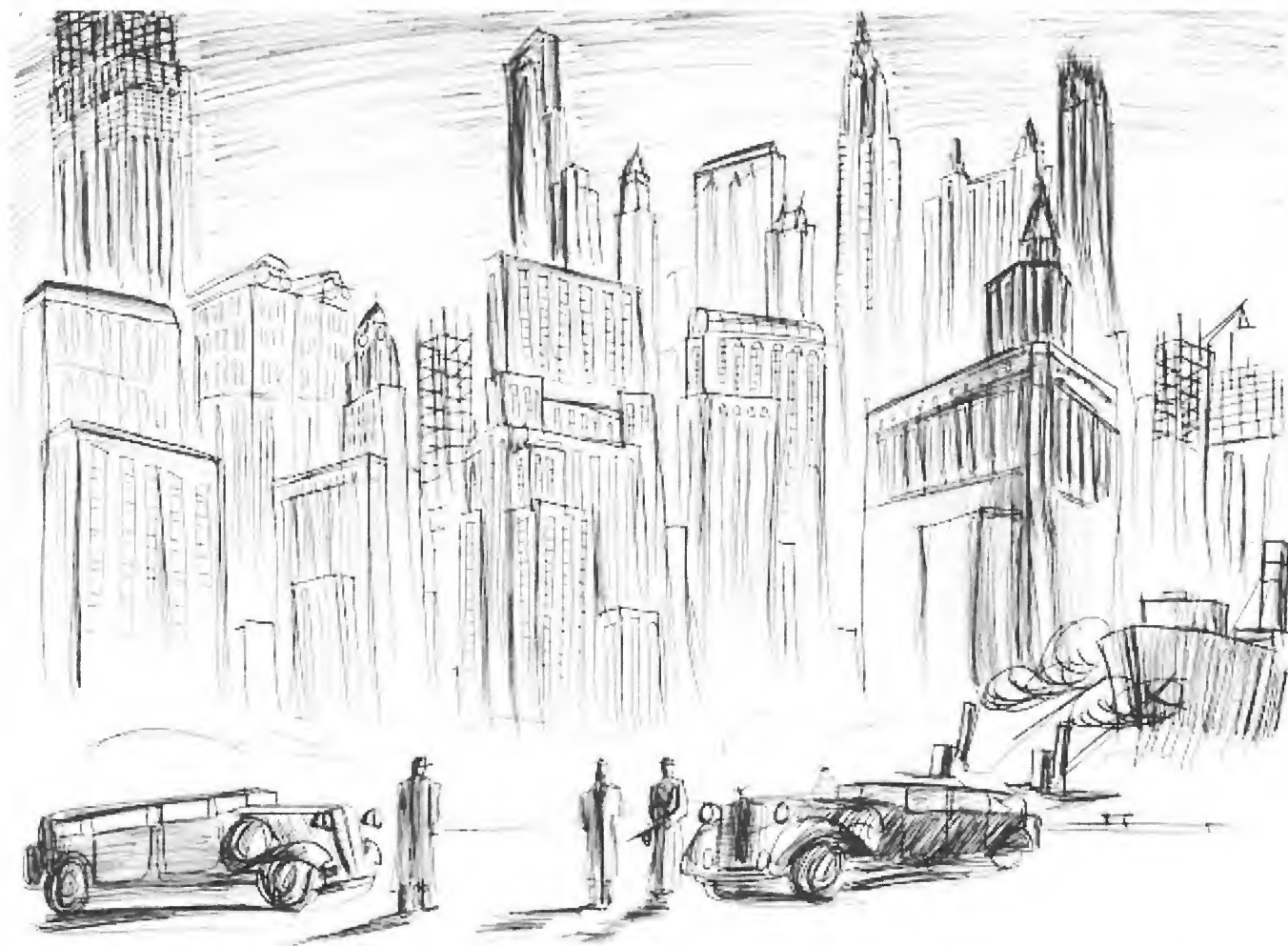
Don't run away,
Walk with pride to
The escape you
Never could deny.

Don't hide from me,
Seeking with endless finality.
Just know that I
Could never
Leave your side...

You're found for me...

Untitled

Francisco Gonzalez



Broken

Randy Schlegel

These tatters of my soul
The shreds of myself
My world is shattered
The void is created
I am alone in a crowd
I am lost with a compass
The North Star leads me south
Darkness in the day
My world is a jagged edge
One side to danger
The other to sorrow
How is this fair?
Where am I to go?
This is not the last though
I will keep looking
Somewhere my tatters,
Somewhere my shreds,
Will become part of a whole
Yes, I see it now
There is a faint light in the horizon
It's coming from the west
My compass is worthless
I will travel towards the west
This is new territory
A place to discover
And maybe by chance
I will fill in the holes
And make my soul complete
Again

When She Sings

Jennifer Ruff

She sounds like a frog when she sings,
but I haven't the heart to tell her.
She's been singing since she was only two,
even then she couldn't carry a tune.
She would invite me to all the concerts.
Yet she didn't see the earplugs that I shoved in before the first song.
Even her parents will cringe at her voice.
But when asked how it was they nod and smile.
They have tried to spark her interest in other things,
like painting, baking, or the softball team.
She says that singing is her dream,
and that she will do anything to make it come true.
But she sounds like a frog when she sings,
and I haven't the heart to tell her.

Found In The Most Unexpected Places

Kelsey Reynolds



Faeries

Christina Heath

On dark moonless nights,
Faeries dance in public view,
Smelling the tastes of summer.

The Garden of Eden is dead,
While the full moon still lives,
Calling tides to move further up shore.

The blue flowers of emotions
Are living death
As people fly into universes

Oh Pixie;
You're going to dream
Of red moons

While trees continue whispering
Of the faeries
Still illuminated in darkness

Heart Of Stone

Anna Rohaly

I am a stone.
I am hard, I am cold.
I am strong, difficult to break.
But pound on me, I shatter.
Throw me into water, I sink.
Put me with others and I build walls and hide.
I can be helpful, I can keep warm.
I can provide shelter and safety.
Sometimes I am ugly on the outside but beautiful deep down,
but you overlook me, pass me by.
You never notice me, never see me
until you really need me.
Is that fair? Is it right to only use me?
Never to see that I'm more than a material thing?
I may be hard, sometimes cold,
but like you with blood, I have a heart.
So pick me up and hold me close,
keep my safe in your arms.
Warm me, polish me, love me,
don't drop me or throw me away.

Untitled

Erin Melvin



Pontattack

Andrew Dudich



Midnight Express

Andrew Dudich

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Jellyfish Like

Kelsey Reynolds



Sunset

Kelsey Reynolds



Seizure

Kathleen Grady



Growth

Kathleen Grady



Sacred Treasure

Katie Vanderkolk



Tiny Kisses

Samantha Mitchell



Detail Harvest

Bonnie Zimmer



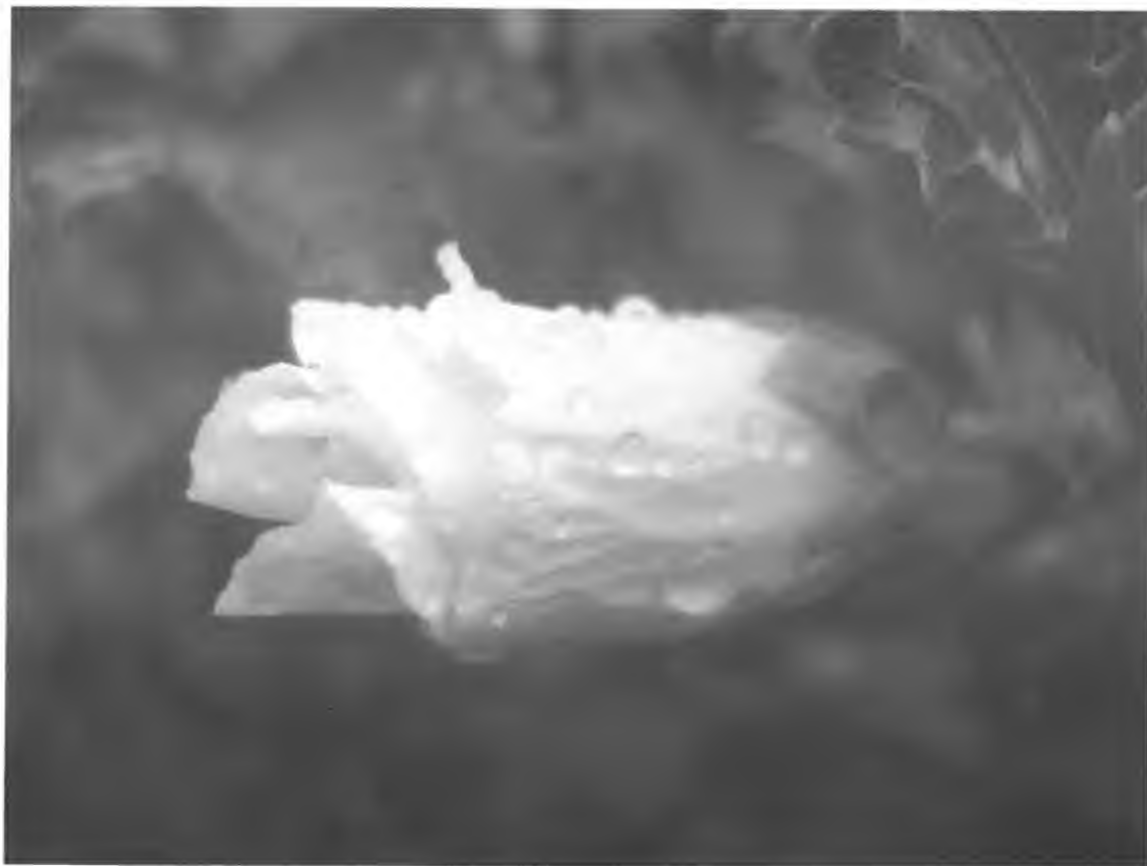
Athenian Sun

Mike Koscielny



After The Rain

Allison Harp



Morning Pleasure

Morgan Myers

The sun is rising;
Its gathering warmth tingles through me,
Its rays trailing heated fingers
Across my flesh.

The breeze tickles;
The clouds wisp across the coming dawn,
Caressing my skin with the promise of blue skies.
And the sun keeps rising,
Coiling hotter and hotter,
Drawn into my body
Like the touch of a lover...

Then it breaks.
Light explodes, and colors
Take on sound in this
World of senses.
The vividness makes me want
To cry out.

As the day wakens,
The colors wind down.
The living takes precedence,
And the sun fades to the background,
Waiting for another morning pleasure.

Opposites

Anna Rohaly

Up is like down when black is white,
backwards is forwards when day is night.

Long and short, plump and thin,
all topsy-turvy causing no din.

Ice is warm and coffee is cold.

No difference between granite and gold.

Left three times is the same as right,
A mouse is not weak but has great might.

Accept all but still stop and reject,
all wrong is right, am I correct?

Arc De Trio

Mike Koscielny



Clap to This!

Jean Monfort

Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack
Dressed herself in Prada, a beautiful outfit all in
Black, black, black
Accentuate by sterling silver
Buttons, buttons, buttons
Topped with Swarovski crystals all down her
Back, back, back.
On Thursday, after the routine of taking a late brunch of spinach and egg whites,
She asked her
Mother ("mother...Mother!")
Who pretended not to hear her, for she was on a conference cell phone conversation, for fifteen
Cents, cents, cents
Which was a rather insignificant amount of change. She had to break a twenty with the doorman, just
to go see Spengalo's
Elephants, elephants, elephants
Down in the shabby chic town square, much improved from its previous years as a haven for pimps
and violent thugs, jump over a
Fence, fence, fence.
Once there, Mary enjoyed the feeling of slumming it, though her Swarovski, sterling silver all black
Prada outfit drew almost as much attention as Spengalo's jumping elephants, which jumped so
High, high, high
They shot clear above the buildings around them, pacaderms with invisible rocket packs on their
backs, since they disappeared into the clouds where they touched the
Sky, sky, sky
The crowd was breathless, waiting. They had a long time to do so, since they didn't come
Back, back, back,
Till the Fourth of
July, ly, ly
And neither did Mary, who ran off with Spengalo himself, the rather handsome (if a little angular in
the face) magician and owner of the jumping elephants. It was a rambunctious few months, seeing the
world. On the Fourth of
July, ly, ly
The elephants came

Back, back, back
Bits of cloud falling from their giant, thinner frames, as they fell from the
Sky, sky, sky
And from the
High, high, high
Heights they fell with increasing speed, alarming all the audience. Mary knew it was unnecessary, as
Spengalo told her they always landed on the other side of the
Fence, fence, fence
And they did. And so they moved on. She said goodbye to the
Elephants, elephants, elephants
And kissed her temporary lover farewell. Once their caravan had rattled on down the streets, Mary used
the extra
Cents, cents, cents
To hail a cab to take her back home to her
Mother, mother, mother
Who grounded her and took away her cell phone for disappearing for months, missing most of the im-
portant spring social functions. She then looked at Mary's
Back, back, back
And noticed that some of the Swarovski crystals were gone, and a few of the silver
Buttons, buttons, buttons
Were undone. This was further cause for outrage, and Mary's mother, in a fit of motherly devotion and
dismay, demanded the beautiful
Black, black, black
Prada outfit back from her "slattern" of a daughter, chiding, "You will never see the light of day again,
Miss Mary
Mack, Mack, Mack!"

Strings and Needles

Elizabeth Gray

Patterns, charts, lace created with string.

You think this is easy?

To learn YO, SSK, K2tog, seed stitch, I-cord, picking up.

Following long instructions half-written with two letters.

SM, slip, stockinette for five inches,

Finding a mistake four inches down and frog it:

Rip-it!

Rip-it!

You watch little old ladies flying through the loops and think 'quaint.'

You don't understand the wrist pains, cramped shoulders, pricked fingers.

Sitting on this bench here, watch me,

Repetitive twists of my fingers and hands,

Motions you don't understand.

Rib three rows, BO.

I'm going to have a sweater and you still don't understand how I've done it.

Knitting, bitches!

A Single Cigarette

Olivia Markwalder

A single cigarette
still sits, the only one left in the box,
just waiting to be held and waiting to be kissed.

The Girls' Bathroom

Dan Zimmer

They say that there are couches inside.
They say that there are extra sinks and towels.
Their stalls are bigger.
The doors stay locked.
Toilet paper highways roll on forever in there.
The sinks never drip and the seats don't creak.
The water doesn't spill when they flush.
They have flowers and pictures and other nice things.
There's a ferris wheel inside or a castle or a magical creature that sleeps only on it's left side.
There's so many things that are hidden in there. We know it, we know it.
The magic is there, the beauty.
No smells!
Only the smells of childhood laughter and giggles.
It must be some giant picnic inside, where lions are the heads of tables and they talk!
Giants are gentle and let the little ones walk.
There is an army of beavers inside that fight with macaroni and cheese.
No stains!
Only stains left by fireflies in the night skies.
Their annoying buzz sounds or chirps from the crickets can not be heard.
Instead its an orchestra, conducted by panda bears, penguins, and zebras.
How magical, the girls bathroom, it is.
Behind those doors is a great adventure just waiting to take place.
The girls just get everything these days.
It's no wonder they are always in there, doing everything from their nails to their hair.
But boys, hold on there. I have one epic question that may be our glory.
Our justice.
The one single amazing bestest thing we have that they do not.
Sure they have everything,
But is there a urinal in there?

Pillar Mountain

Maggie Schmitt



Your Move

Danny Livarchik

The everlasting pain I feel
Is not physical, but mental.
Out of fear I shrivel,
but out of love I blossom.

Every day is a different battle;
I rise with the sun,
cherish each meal,
and focus on the tasks freshly revealed.

My mind suddenly spirals out of control;
Observing the work, looking far in advance,
I now battle myself while attempting the tasks.
The mind is strong, will I surpass the obstacles it left for me?

I strive to elude the serpents looking out,
climbing down from trees to interest, make me free.
Remember the goal, the basis of the task;
Otherwise my fall may continue
(To the pit of a flask).

No heroes can intervene at this hour,
Perseverance relies on only me, holding a flower
In my hand— staring, wondering what to do—
Shall I watch it shrivel, let it die,
or carry on its life with my life— make it bloom.

Untitled

Mallory Wyatt



Love Waits

Christina Heath

Disposed in bed I lay unsleeping
Watching the world through a window
Mimicking my cold loneliness:

Butterflies; art of the world flutters
Around, creating remembered images
Of a life so long ago,

Outside recalls the realities of love
Killing me softly
For love seems to still believe in me somehow.

I tear love down,
No knowing why it stayed waiting so

Painfully, its constant companionship
Seemingly lights the way
For futures yet unknown;

Unable to keep away
From persistence and yearning:
It waits burning like a fire.

A new day brings
New chances that seem the same.
Things only appear to change;

Time will go on forever
Without second thoughts
Until time as we know it has run out

And when time does end, love will see
I am still unchanged
Though it has been patiently waiting on me.

Shades of Autumn

Carla Luzadder

Shades of amber flow across the land,
Painting the landscape that once was bland.
The sun casts a shadow from a contrasting view
That highlights the scene with a bright golden hue.
Pieces of summer drift down from the trees,
Forming collages of reds, yellows, and greens.
Flocks of fowl fly in perfect formation,
Migrating South to a warmer location.
Daylight grows dim at an earlier hour.
A misty haze lingers from an afternoon shower.
The chill in the air that the fall season yields
Leaves traces of fog hovering over the fields.
Mature crops of corn standing tall and dry
Amid slender strands of wheat and rye
Dance in the moonlight under the stars,
Awaiting the harvest of sun ripened shards.
The squirrels are out working from dawn until dark,
Gathering up food, digging holes in the park,
Searching the ground for the right destination
To stow all their acorns for the winter's duration.
The home of the singing Robin Redbreast,
That skilled architecture of paper and sticks,
Still secure in the arms of the old oak tree,
An abandoned shell, now silent and empty.
There's a somber feeling that autumn can bring,
The fading of summer, and the scent of spring.

Soon this vibrant collage becomes an ice blanket,
Transposing the colors to a smoky gray palette.

Sadness of the Day

Randy Schlegel

Darkness of the day
Quoting the requiem of the night
Holes in the salvation of all
Anger in the hope of destiny
Sorrow at the face of infinity
Oh what a plague
To be forsaken at such
Dreams and joys flare
Fading like the dying day
Loneliness is the only companion
The cracks of light break the dim
Rain of the gloom fading to mist
Sight full haze and wonder
The day is sad
The night is content and odd
Down is up and south is south
Confused with the order of things
The day regains independence
And night remains content
To wonder and think is odd
Sincerity is pleasant but void
Time heals the day
And gives hope to the poor
Time heals the night
But forever the void of distance

Desperately Alone

Anna Rohaly



Solitude is the lone soldier standing in a field of blood.
It is the wind moaning as it blows over his gun,
It is his life entrenched against encircling death.
It is the shimmering tear etched in the grime of his face.
It is the cries of his fallen brothers echoing in his mind.
It is the prayer he cries out as he drops to his knees.

Connections

Elizabeth Gray

There has to be some connection,
Between what I dream and who I am.
But, seriously, why am I dreaming
of eating human fingers?

Untitled

Francisco Gonzalez



For four straight days the sky has been clear
Not a single cloud has passed through
Nor a gust of heavy wind, or a drop of rain
From horizon to horizon nothing but clear blue

The farmers stare at the distance
Looking for a storm in formation
Their crops slowly begin to change color
From bright green to a crisp yellow

The humidity begins to rise
The sun beats down on their necks
Frustration causes them to perspire
Finally an Anvil cloud appears

An Order of Eggs

Anna Rohaly

Order is like a carton of eggs.

It is the militant rows of equal number.

It is the layers of shell, white, and then yolk.

It is the egg cooking from the outside in.

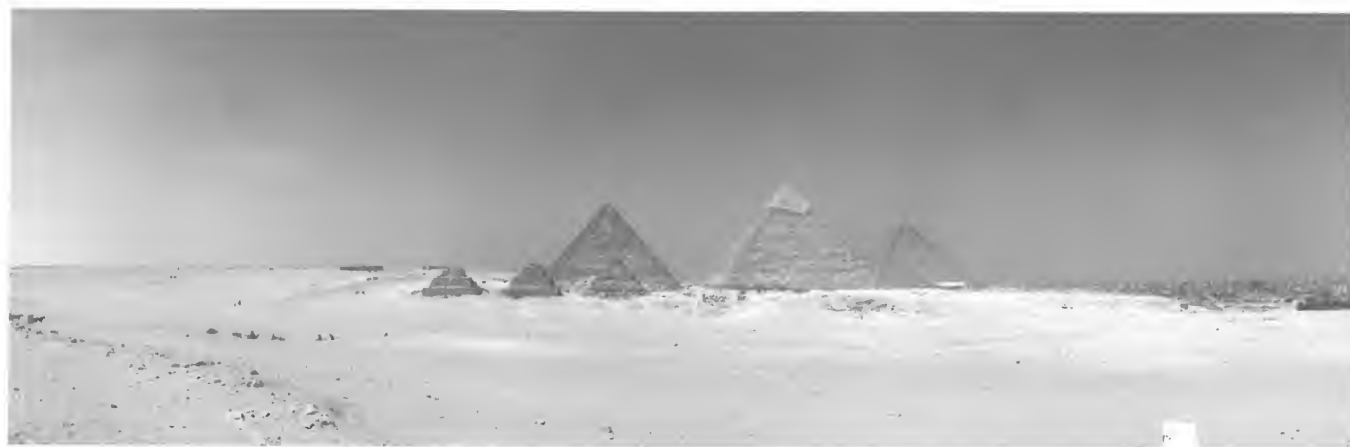
It is the egg's place in a list of ingredients.

It is the unanswerable question, which came first?

The chicken or the egg?

The Pyramids

Mike Koscielny



Haikus

Christina Heath

Winter

I still dream of you
On winter days of ice storms
When the world is dead

Summer

Thank you loneliness
For shielding the rising sun
When summer comes bright

Spring

Spring breezes perfume
The air of lilac blossoms
Bringing life back

Fall

Ocean waves swoon death,
Holding off night
For a few more hours

Business Casual

Kathleen Grady



One Fry at a Time

Elizabeth Gray

I had never been fond of McDonald's; my disgust rested in the lingering sensory disgust one always received after visiting there: the greasy, gritty feeling of the fries, the smell of microwaved beef, and the rather stale taste of the bread. This was the reason I would try to eat anywhere but there. I never suspected that my lingering distaste might have another, more sinister reason.

It was just past noon. The day had been dragging slowly. I had been let out late from my class and my lunch hour had been curved down to a mere twenty minutes. Now I was forced to go to McDonald's, eat as quickly as possible, and hopefully get back to class on time. With a sigh, I pulled up to the drive-through and rolled down my window. Almost immediately, I was greeted by a perky voice.

"Hello, welcome to McDonald's. You would like a McChicken sandwich and a medium fry with no drink, right?"

"Yes."

"Alright, please pull forward."

I felt the familiar creeping feeling against the back of my neck. I glanced around me, nervously wondering how the worker had known my order. My car crawled forward slowly before the answer dawned on me. It had to be one of my friends who worked here. The voice had sounded familiar. They had probably taken my order before and recognized my car. I rolled my eyes, ready for the big joke to be on me. However, when I pulled up to the drive-through, I did not recognize the lady in front of me. I suppose my friend could have taken my order and then gone to the front for something.

I dug through my wallet to find change as the McDonald's worker took the order of the person behind me. Waiting, change in hand, I examined the woman being the glass. The standard McDonald's uniform with the strange headset McDonald's workers always had on. The standard semi-polite smile met my examination as she turned back to the screen with a one moment movement to me. Yet there was something odd about the expression. A slightly blank look was on her face, almost as if her actions were divorced from her thoughts. I was just thinking that she must have had a bad day when she turned to see me watching her. She smiled and opened the sliding glass window. There was something creepy about that smile, something that set off a warning bell inside me. I handed her my change, exchanging pleasantries as my car inched forward. I glanced at her ear bud one last time and shivered as a strange feeling slithered up my spine. At the point where it was polite, I moved forward quickly.

I was getting way too creeped out for a trip to McDonald's. Seriously, it was McDonald's, what was going to happen?

Another creepy smile was given out along with my McChicken and fries. I tried to smile back,

but by this time I just wanted to get away. The hunger had to be messing with my mind and making me hallucinate. Ignoring the feeling of someone watching me, I parked in a lot a few stores down to eat my lunch. I quickly situated the fry between my legs and opened up my sandwich. I took a huge bite and sighed as I relaxed slightly. After a few bites from my sandwich, I reached the container resting between my legs and grabbed a handful of fries. It was the fries that got me, it's always the fries.

One bite and I felt the molten goo of a thousand grease traps slide down my throat. I choked and winced at the aftertaste that hung heavy on my tongue. It was then that I finally remembered the girl's head piece. Finally, it clicked what was wrong with it. It had been plugged into her head.

"But how—"

A gag cut off the words as the fry liquified in my stomach. I coughed, choked, trying to get it back out of me. I struggled, pulling down my mirror and trying to figure out why my throat felt constricted. I caught the reflection of the twin arches reflected back at me. A green shade fell over my eyes and I looked through the sludge to see the twin arches light with a new message.

"McDonald's: Alienizing the world, one French fry at a time."

"Hey George! When did you start working for McDonald's?" I gave the girl in the car a smile, realizing somewhere in my mind that it was just a shade too creepy.

"Yesterday. You should order some fries, they are really great today."

"You know, fries do sound good."

Untitled

Allison Harp





Loving an Addict Who Is Your Drug

Christina Heath

Oh! You're the addiction of my life
My blow
My mind
My white powder looking behind the mirrors
Picturing our horror story
Some call love, of Monday nights
As you lay on top, muttering naked; words
Mistakes and names unknown
From a universe of smoke and haze
I'll feed your habit you are my _____
Fill the blank; 3 month intervention
Then closing of our magnets
Centered to each other
Back into oblivion
Oh! Blissful addiction

Numb Confusion

Randy Schlegel

Fragility of my mind
Fragility of my soul
Patience abandoned
And spirits crushed
Numbness, all I feel
Confusion the same
Sorrow and scorn
Anger at me
Blind by love
Blind by future
Carried in the moment
End of brilliance
Why?
I am not foolish
I am not mean
I am not faint-hearted
I am not the same
Repeated love
And wishful thoughts
What have I lost?
What is it worth?
The right thing done
The wrong thing felt
Confusion the same
Heart break is equal
What do I feel?
Being a good person,
Why do I feel like a monster?
Emotions are my toys
People are the same
But I didn't mean to
Happiness is all I wanted
Why does happiness come at such a high cost?
Emotional pain
Physical pain

Sick and tired
But hopeful and young
Confusion is the same
All I feel
All I thought
Am I numb?
Is there an end?
Where are the tears?
Where are the hugs?
Why am I alone,
In this crowd of thousands
Why is all I feel,
All I hope,
All I pray,
Ending without regard
Never for myself
All for others
All I know
Love or lust
Like or hate
I don't know
This spinning world
And the lives in it
Time the only constant
Repeating over again
Hope in tatters
Joy put aside
Confusion is around
And yet faint
Why?
Time to rebuild

Gesturing

Morgan Myers

She told him with a little gesture he had never seen her use before.

She told him that it was over.

He no longer heard her, her lies about loving him, denying she had slept with that other man. All he could see was that nervous twirl of her wedding ring, watching her rotate the gold band over and over again as it glinted in the fluorescent light of their bedroom. He had never seen her do that before. It was a nervous habit she must have just picked up in the last few months.

That band was a mockery now. A symbol of a forever love that they didn't have. That neverending circle should instead stand for the hole in his heart.

She was a thief of five years of his life.

"David, David! Listen to me!"

He looked at her, right into her beautiful, cheating brown eyes.

"No."

He turned around and began walking out of the room. Distantly he heard her calling his name, heard her pleading with him. But he knew it was done. That twirling gave away all her lies.

She pulled sharply on his arm in front of the door, trying to get him to stop.

"David, listen. I didn't do anything wrong. I would never do that to—"

"Let. Go."

He pulled his arm from her clutching hands and quietly closed the door on her sobbing face.

She told him with a little gesture he had never seen her use before.

It was just a flick of her wrist, a negligent motion like she was waving away a fly. It was so reminiscent of her mother, such a perfect characterization of her many self-righteous rants.

He watched his six-year-old daughter explain to him why it was so important for her to have that exact dress. The social importance, the monetary gain—it was an investment she explained—and the overall happiness it would foster. She would be just like her mother.

And he didn't know what the hell to do with her.

When Shelley had died, he didn't know what to do with himself. His daughter had only been two then, and he had had to scrape himself together for her. Now here he stood four years later, watching his wife all over again in their daughter, and he had never loved or missed her more.

He didn't know what to do with a child he had to raise and shape, who would have his wife's attitude, brain, and looks. She was going to wrap him so tight around her chubby little child's finger he wouldn't be able to breathe without seeing Shelley in her every second of every day. He thought that would fade with time, but it had only grown stronger.

"Dad, you aren't listening!" She stomped her brown-sandaled foot. She was wearing a cream and cherry dress her mother had bought her that barely fit any longer. Her strawberry blond

hair had been quickly brushed this morning and fell to her mid-back and hung in her face, partly covering her gray-green eyes.

It was so Shelley he couldn't decide whether to laugh or to cry.

"Of course I am, sweetie, I was just thinking of mommy."

She blinked. "Oh."

He laughed, scooping her up and standing.

She pressed her hands to his cheeks, her fingers grubbing at his face.

"Don't worry about mommy, dad. She went to heaven with the angels. Ms. Hernish said so in Sunday school class."

He choked up, burying his face into her thick hair. She patted him on his head, saying, "It's okay, daddy. It's okay."

After a moment he lifted his head up and gave her a quick kiss on the forehead. He grabbed the dress she had wanted off the rack, holding it up the measure the length. The red fabric, with a cream bow around the waist, was soft, and a little long, but that would work in his favor as she grew. And she seemed to be growing too fast anymore.

"I think this dress would be perfect, baby."

She hugged him tight. "Thank you, daddy. Mommy would like it too."

He smiled. "I think she would."

The Light of Her Eyes

Joel Arreguin

Lights exploded,
Above our eyes.
Raining beauty,
Color streaking,
The navy skies.
I hear her breathe,
Loud rockets cry.
She gazes at me.
They flew so high.
A wisp of smoke,
Filled the cool air.
The flare of love,
Upon her stare.
Screams of rockets,
Made her eyes dream.
She shivers and
I hold her close.
Her eyes, closer,
They blink a smile.
I take a risk
And plant a kiss.
The lights cease just
One last time but
Her eyes do not.

A Circle With No Middle

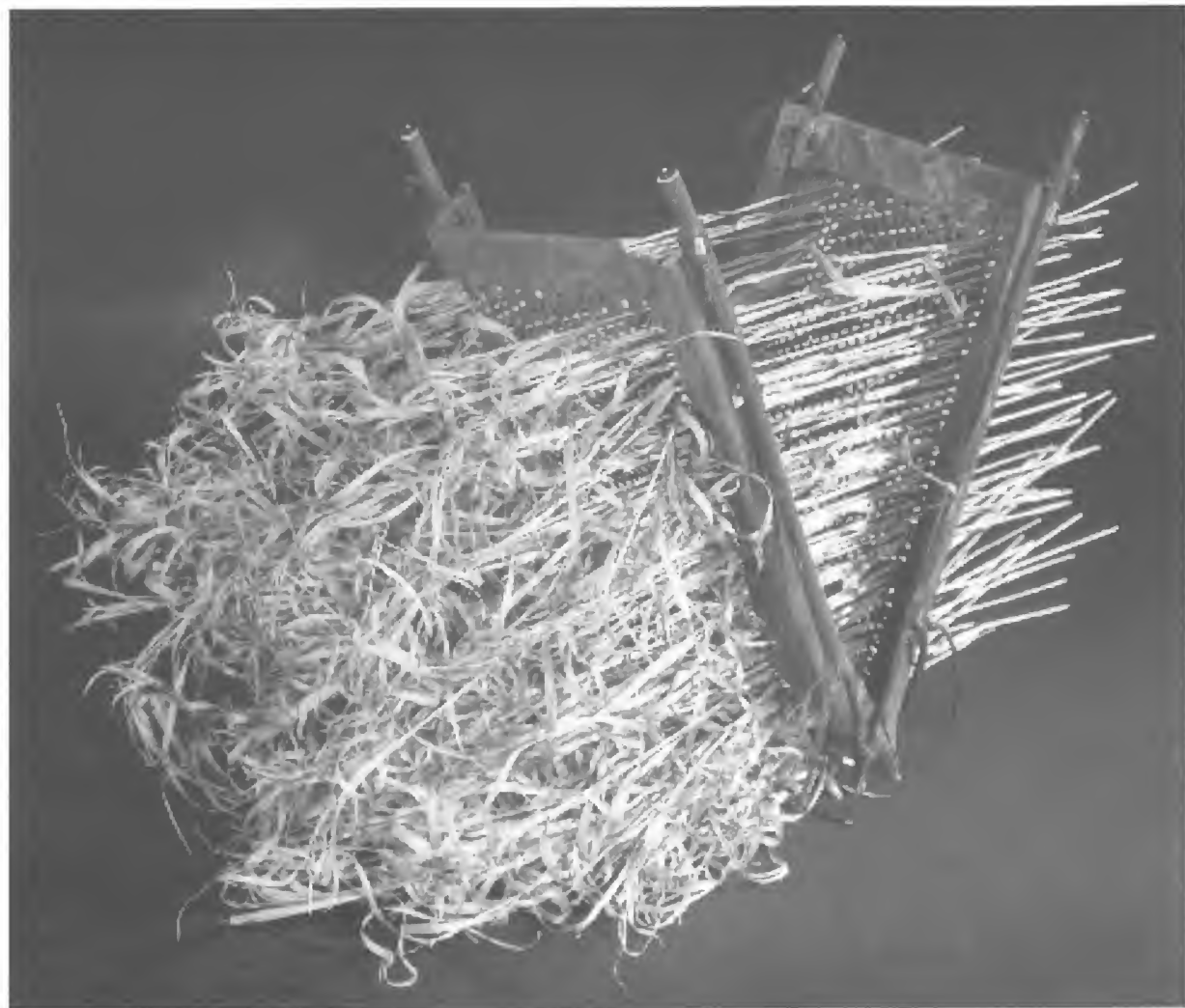
Anna Rohaly

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I move close to the shining metal machine,
hit the button that will warm the grease and free the tray.
Moving over to the counter, I take the silver bowl that gleams
and mix in it the dough, till it is just a little more liquid than clay.
I move to get the the thermometer from the drawer on my right
and while it reads the batter's temperature, I check the melting lard.
I look to see if the batter has now reached 72 degrees Fahrenheit.
Carrying the batter to machine, I put up the grease guard.
lift the bowl up and scoop the batter out into the funneled tin.
I scrape the bowl clean and begin to turn the lever around.
From the bottom of the funnel appears a pale doughnut ring.
I watch it fall into the grease, Splash!, I love that sound.
The edges of the doughnuts bake and turn a golden brown.
I flip them over, wait a minute, and lift them from the grease.
The melted lard drips away and the smell drifts all over town.
I roll the doughnuts in cinnamon sugar then take a bite with my teeth.
Mmm...hot and good, I smile.

Improvisation

Bonnie Zimmer



Monologue For a Pen

Olivia Markwalder

You have time and I have ink.
We both, use each other
Until we completely run out,
Then somebody throws us away,
And on the same day,
The next one is made
To fulfill The Purpose.
You think you are so unique.

